



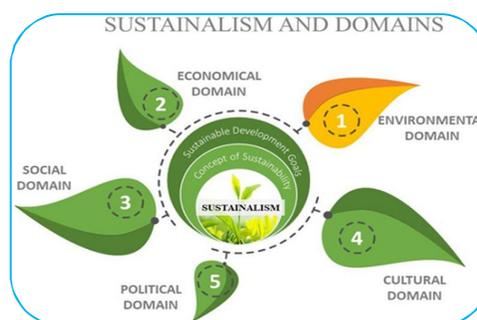
LIFE STYLE CHANGES FOR ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: A SOCIOLOGICAL REVIEW

Dr. Narendra Gupta

Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology,
Bundelkhand College, Jhansi.

ABSTRACT

At present, rapidly changing lifestyle is affecting both the environment and society. Technological progress, urbanization, industrialization and consumerist view have made the lifestyle convenient but its consequences are also coming out. People are using more resources in changing lifestyle, causing additional exploitation of natural resources and arising situation of environmental imbalance. As the world faces mounting environmental challenges, shifting to a sustainable lifestyle has become essential for the preservation of both ecosystems and human well-being. A sustainable lifestyle is a decisive constituent for achieving environmental and social sustainability. It demands a comprehensive approach to daily activities and decisions to reduce negative environmental impacts as well as to improve individual and societal well-being. This paper looks into the essential elements for better and a sustainable lifestyle, such as reducing waste output, less consumption, water conservation, saving energy and a shift toward environmentally conscious mobility. Adoption of such a way of life not only saves environmental resources but it also endorses an equal, healthier and resilient society. Individuals can contribute to a harmonious cohabitation between human beings and the environment by lining up their personal beliefs with sustainable actions paving the path for a more wealthy future. This possibility has been explored in this paper and tried to provide a way ahead for renewing current knowledge towards sustainable lifestyle.



KEYWORDS: environment, changing lifestyle, sustainable practices, social norms, sustainable development.

INTRODUCTION

India is known as a country of rich cultural heritage from beginning where a strong inter-connection has been observed between humans and environment since ancient times. In ancient Indian tradition many types of values were established to respect and protect various parts of the nature by humanizing them. These include water, air, soil, river, mountain, trees, animals, birds, vegetation etc. which were protected by humans. Today when it is assumed about the crisis faced by humanity in the present world, it becomes crystal clear that on the ground of logic and scientific thinking in ancient times, individual's lifestyle and values were made environment-friendly. It was so that human life and environment may remain harmonious as well as human present and future life can be happy. Furthermore, it is notable that people controlled their wants and limited their needs. They took from the nature only what they needed so that the natural resources could be preserved for the future generations. Whatever civilization development was done in ancient times, all was environment-friendly and done keeping in mind the rights of future generations. At the same time, in order to keep

nature safe, instead of considering it as a mere inert matter, it was linked with human sensibilities. In prior, it was seen that climate friendly architecture, plant based compostable material, pottery and hand-made pattals were used by people in their daily life. Such daily habits show that people in ancient India had sensitivity towards the environment. But global conditions changed gradually over the time and subsequently the harmony between human and nature is gradually getting damaged in the name of material progress and development.

To build up modern civilization, people rapidly started exploiting natural resources. While technological development has promoted industrialization and mechanization on the one hand, commercialism and consumerism have been encouraged on the other hand. As a result, instead of being just a human being, man became a consumer and without caring for nature, he kept striving only for his own upliftment. Consumption trends have made people used to living a life full of convenience and luxury as well. In this way, due to industrial development in modern world, natural resources are being exploited indiscriminately. Excessive use of technology, consumerism, luxury and marketism have harmed the environment beyond its tolerance and destroyed nature's ability to balance. The consequences of this have manifested in the body global warming and climate changes. It clears that by the evil deeds of people, there has arisen a crisis of survival in front of humanity and environment. People are getting new health related issues. The effects of natural disasters such as earthquakes, floods and droughts are increasing rapidly. Apart from this, uneven distribution of rainfall is observed as well as about one-third of the world's population is at risk of becoming homeless due to rising sea levels. Along with this, the crisis of food security and safe drinking water is also being seen.

Considering the current global circumstances, it is obvious that one of the reasons for these problems is unethical behaviour of human beings. For the environment and sustainable development, a person needs to conduct his behaviour and lifestyle in such a way that the balance between capacity of the environment and the sustainability of development are maintained. On this ground, life style changes for environment and sustainable development is the need of new era to be collectively followed by people to live a life that is in tune with nature. To deal with these problems, various conferences including G20 have been held over the decades. Recently, by taking a global initiative, Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi has started the life style for environment mission with the tagline 'Live green, Breathe Green, Go green' aiming to adoption of sustainable lifestyles and to tackle the challenges facing due to environmental degradation and changing monsoon. In this context, PM appeals to people to take only one simple environment-friendly action per day for 21 days to adopt habits in daily life. By adopting new habits in daily life such as use of plant-based food instead of meat, proper waste disposal, plantation, encouragement of bio fertilizers in place of chemical fertilizers, use of pottery etc. a country can achieve the goal of environment and sustainable development. Apart from these, reducing wastage of water consumption, lowering the electricity, stopping vehicles on traffic signals, changing the methods of travelling such as use of bicycle, e-bike, e-car etc., using cloth bags for shopping in place of plastic bags, giving up leather products, limiting food wastes and doing other things which are environment friendly can make a positive impact on future of sustainable environment. In this way, by adopting some eco-friendly changes in lifestyle, environmental damage can be reduced and sustainable development can be possible.

Theoretical Frameworks on Lifestyle Change

Lifestyle change means changing the way people live such as how they travel, eat, shop, or use energy. Lifestyle change toward more sustainable ways of living can be understood using different theories. These theories help to understand that lifestyle change is not only about personal choice but also about habits, social influence and wider systems.

Rational Choice and Behavioral Economics

Rational choice theory suggests that individuals make decisions by carefully thinking costs and benefits. According to this theory, people will choose environment friendly behavior if they believe that the benefits are greater than disadvantages. For example, someone might decide to use public transport instead of driving if it is faster, cheaper or reduces stress. In this view, offering financial rewards or

penalties can encourage people to change their behavior and makes them feel socially responsible. However, in real life, decisions are often more complicated because people do not always think logically. It shows that people are influenced by habits, emotions and biases. Because of this, small changes known as nudges can guide people toward better choices. Nudges do not force people to change but make sustainable options easier or more attractive. Examples include making renewable energy, placing recycling bins in convenient locations, designing cities so walking is easier or showing people how many others are saving energy. These methods help overcome human limitations in decision-making without forcing them.

Practice Theory

This theory focuses on everyday routines practices and habits instead of focusing on individual choices. Activities like cooking meals, commuting to work and shopping for groceries are not just personal decisions while they depend on what tools are available and what society expects. It argues that behaviors are shaped by three main things: materials, skills and meanings. Materials include tools and infrastructure such as cars, roads kitchens and public transport. Skills include knowledge and abilities like knowing how to cook healthy meals or use public transport apps. Meanings refer to social values and expectations such as ideas about convenience or success. From this perspective, people do not choose unsustainable behavior simply because they want to. Often, they are limited by the systems around them. For example, if a city does not have safe cycling paths or reliable buses, people are more likely to drive.

Social Identity and Cultural Theory

Social identity theory explains how behavior is connected to group identity. People tend to act in ways that fit the groups they belong to or admire, such as families, friends, social classes or communities. If sustainable behavior becomes part of a valued identity, people are more likely to adopt it. For example, someone who sees themselves as an “ethical consumer” may choose eco-friendly products. Parents may adopt sustainable habits because they want to protect their children’s future. On the other hand, people may resist lifestyle changes if they feel those changes threaten their identity or traditions. For instance, some may see environmental rules as limiting personal freedom or challenging traditional lifestyle. Apart from this, cultural theory helps to explain the differences in attitudes. Some people value individual freedom and prefer minimal rules while others value collective responsibility and support shared solutions. These cultural beliefs shape how people understand environmental problems and respond to policies aimed at lifestyle change.

Social Movements and Collective Action

This perspective focuses on collective action rather than individual behavior. Lifestyle change does not happen only at the individual level but it also happens through group action. Social movements like climate wallops can change public attitudes, influence laws and policies and create new social norms. Being part of a group, these movements make sustainable behavior easier and more rewarding bringing people together to promote shared goals such as protecting the environment or reducing waste. For example, zero-waste movements encourage people to reduce plastic use, reuse items and recycle more. It provides motivation, support and a sense of belonging. People are more likely to maintain sustainable habits when they feel supported by a community. Social movements also pressure governments and companies to make changes that individuals cannot achieve alone such as banning harmful products or investing in renewable energy. Thus, these movements show that lifestyle change often works best when people act together.

Enablers of Sustainable Lifestyle Change

Sustainable lifestyle change is encouraged by a range of enabling factors that make environmentally responsible choices easier, more attractive and socially accepted. One of the most important enablers is education and awareness. Environmental education helps individuals understand the consequences of their actions and fosters values that support sustainability. When people are

informed about issues such as climate change, resource depletion and waste management, they are more likely to adopt responsible behaviors. Schools, community programs and public awareness campaigns play a key role in building environmental literacy and empowering individuals to make informed, long-term decisions.

Social norms and community influence also strongly shape sustainable behavior. People tend to model their actions on those around them, making community support a powerful driver of change. Initiatives such as neighborhood recycling programs, community gardens or collective energy-saving challenges can normalize sustainable practices. Visible role models, including public figures or local leaders, further reinforce the idea that sustainable living is both achievable and socially valued.

Economic incentives are another crucial enabler, as financial considerations often guide consumer choices. Subsidies for renewable energy installations, tax reductions for energy-efficient appliances, and policies that price carbon emissions can shift market behavior in favor of sustainability. By making sustainable options more affordable and unsustainable practices more costly, governments encourage individuals to adopt greener alternatives.

Strong institutional support is equally essential. Government regulations, such as bans on single-use plastics, alongside corporate sustainability commitments, help create an environment where sustainable choices become the default. Urban planning that prioritizes green spaces, public transport and walkable cities further support sustainable living.

Finally, technological innovations enable sustainable lifestyles by increasing convenience and efficiency. Smart home systems, electric vehicles, and digital platforms for sharing goods reduce resource use and environmental impact, especially when they are accessible and affordable to a wide population.

Barriers to Sustainable Lifestyle Change

Despite growing awareness of environmental issues, many individuals struggle to adopt sustainable lifestyle changes due to a range of interconnected barriers. One major challenge lies in structural constraints, which often limit people's ability to make environment friendly choices. In many cities, inadequate infrastructure such as unsafe and inefficient public transportation systems makes car dependency almost unavoidable. Additionally, economic barriers play a significant role, as sustainable options like renewable energy technologies, electric vehicles, or organic food often come with higher upfront costs. Urban planning that prioritizes cars over pedestrians or cyclists further reinforces unsustainable habits by making greener alternatives inconvenient or impractical.

Cultural norms and identity also strongly influence resistance to sustainable practices. In many societies, consumption is closely tied to social status with material possessions symbolizing success and achievement. As a result, reducing consumption or embracing minimalism can feel like a loss of identity or social standing. Environmental lifestyles are sometimes perceived as niche, elitist or incompatible with mainstream values discouraging broader participation. Moreover, deeply rooted traditions related to diet such as meat consumption or travel habits like frequent flying can be difficult to change because they are tied to cultural identity and social expectations.

Psychological factors further complicate sustainable behavior change. People tend to rely on habitual routines that provide comfort and predictability, making change feel inconvenient or stressful. Short-term thinking often outweighs consideration of long-term environmental benefits especially when the positive impacts of individual actions seem abstract or distant. This can lead to cognitive dissonance where individuals recognize environmental problems but fail to act in ways that align with their values.

Finally, policy and institutional barriers can undermine individual efforts. Weak or inconsistent environmental policies along with market incentives that favor unsustainable products make it harder for sustainable choices to become the default. Without strong institutional support, individual motivation alone is often insufficient to drive lasting change.

Thus, a sociological understanding reveals that lifestyle choices are embedded in broader social systems and cultural contexts. Without supportive social and structural conditions, even motivated individuals may find it difficult to maintain sustainable behaviors over time. Social structures play a

decisive role in enabling or constraining sustainable lifestyles. Access to reliable public transportation, renewable energy, affordable housing and safe public spaces directly influences daily behavior. Policies that promote mixed-use development, equitable infrastructure and accessible renewable energy can significantly expand people's capacity to live sustainably by making environmentally friendly choices practical and convenient. Cultural diversity and local context also influence how lifestyle changes are adopted. Values, traditions, and socioeconomic conditions vary widely across communities, meaning that uniform strategies are often ineffective. Approaches that respect local cultures and build on existing community strengths are more likely to succeed. From a policy perspective, promoting sustainable lifestyles requires integrated, multi-level strategies. Supporting community-led initiatives strengthens social norms, while collaboration with the private sector can shift markets toward sustainable products and practices through regulation, incentives and accountability mechanisms.

CONCLUSION

All discussion concludes that the entire life support of human beings completely depends on the environment because of its a great importance in the life of humans and fulfills their big and small basic needs by providing food, shelter, fresh air etc. But the people have adversely impacted the environment by making pollution, growing population, burning fossil fuels and cutting down the forests in large amount for development and personal necessities. These changes have harshly triggered soil erosion, climate change, poor quality of air and unsafe drinkable water. The changes in lifestyles for environment involve making conscious resolutions in various facets of individual's lives from what they consume to how they commute. It requires a shift in the willingness to make changes for the betterment of the environment. An environment-friendly lifestyle is no longer a choice but a necessity for nature's survival. By re-evaluating the daily habits and making conscious pronouncements about day to day priorities, adverse impacts of environment can significantly be reduced and can collectively be created a more sustainable upcoming future. Thus, it is the time to create balance between environment and people along with adoption of sustainable lifestyles for the sake of nature, community and future generation.

REFERENCES:

1. Ajzen, I. (1991). The theory of planned behavior, *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 50 (2), 179-211.
2. Beck, U. (1992). Risk society: Towards a new modernity, Sage Publications.
3. Giddens, A. (1991). Modernity and self-identity: Self and society in the late modern age, Stanford University Press.
4. Jackson, T. (2005). Motivating sustainable consumption: A review of evidence on consumer behaviour and behavioural change, *Sustainable Development Research Network*.
5. Meadowcroft, J. (2011). Engaging with the politics of sustainability transitions, *Environmental Innovation and Societal Transitions*, 1 (1), 70-75.
6. Reckwitz, A. (2002). Toward a theory of social practices: A development in culturalist theorizing, *European Journal of Social Theory*, 5 (2), 243-263.
7. Shahnaz, A. (2023). Sustainable Lifestyle: A Path towards Environmental Sustainability & Sustainable Development, *Management Journal for Advanced Research*, 4(3), 50-53.
8. Shove, E., Pantzar, M., & Watson, M. (2012). The dynamics of social practice: Everyday life and how it changes, Sage Publications.
9. Spaargaren, G. (2003). Sustainable consumption: A theoretical and environmental policy perspective, *Society & Natural Resources*, 16 (8), 687-701.
10. United Nations. (1987). Our common future (Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development), Oxford University Press.
11. World Bank. (2012). Inclusive green growth: The pathway to sustainable development, World Bank Publications.